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Weekly Special Report



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INSIDE

New Grant Highlights U.S. Cultural Support

Agreement Helps Preserve Historic Mosque

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) – United States Ambassador Aurelia E.

Brazeal joined Oromia Regional State President Ato Juneidi Sado on Thursday, August 18, to sign a grant that will make possible the conservation and consolidation of the historic Sheikh Nur Hussein Shrine in Anajinia, Bale Zone.

The grant, in the amount of \$25,600, was provided through the

Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, an annual competitive pro-



Ambassador Brazeal and Ato Juneidi Sado exchange agreement documents

gram of the U.S. Department of State.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Ambassador Brazeal noted that Ethiopia's successful participation in the 2005 Ambassador's Fund competition was a sign not only of deep U.S.-Ethiopian cultural ties, but also of the American people's recognition of the richness and depth of Ethiopia's cultural heritage. She pointed out that the site preserved

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American Human Rights Activist Visits Ethiopia, Sudan

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff
Writer

Washington -- An American legislator who has championed human dignity and political freedom from Burma to El Salvador is taking on Africa, where countries



Congressman
Christopher Smith

such as Ethiopia and Sudan are trying to ride the wave of peace and democracy sweeping the continent.

Christopher Smith (Republican of New Jersey), chairman of the House of Representa-

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by this funding was itself a symbol of the country's religious history and diversity. "Speaking on behalf of the U.S. Mission in Ethiopia," she added, "I can say that we are honored to be a part of this project, one that I hope will draw attention to a site which is not only a part of Ethiopia's national historic heritage, but also a symbol of the pluralist and tolerant version of Islam, and of religion more generally, traditionally practiced in Ethiopia."

Previous Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation grants in Ethiopia have supported conservation efforts at Guzara Castle in North Gondar and a needs-assessment study for the historic monument at Yeha in Tigray.

The Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation is the only U.S. Government program that provides direct small grant support to heritage preservation in less developed

countries. In creating the fund in 2001, the U.S. Congress noted that "in efforts to assist in preserving the heritage of other cultures, we show our respect for them." In 2005, 120 countries were eligible to participate in the Ambassador's Fund; Ethiopia's successful program was one of 87 chosen for funding out of a total of over 150 proposals. ♦



Ato Aklilu Zewdie, Director, Yared School of Music, receives books for the School Library delivered by PAO Sam Westgate. The selected reference works were donated by Pianist Don Wetzel and the University of Southern California School of Music, following upon the pianist's March 2005 concert performances in Addis Ababa.

U.S. Congressman Visits Addis Fistula Hospital

United States Congressman Christopher Smith of New Jersey visited the Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa on Tuesday, August 16, as part of a three-day trip to Ethiopia. Congressman Smith recently authored an amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act to provide funding to help thousands of women suffering from fistula in Africa.

"An estimated two million women globally suffer from fistula, which is responsible for about eight percent of the worldwide annual maternal deaths. These can be treated with a relatively minor surgical procedure that costs as little as \$150 per patient," Smith explained. He praised the work of the Fistula Hospital and its efforts to improve women's health in Ethiopia. "This hospital and its satellite centers in Ethiopia are a model that we hope to use in developing other such centers to help women who suffer needlessly from this terrible condition." ♦



Seen here in front of the Fistula Hospital's memorial to its founder, Dr. Reginald Hamlin, are (from left to right) Chief Executive Officer Mark Bennett; Congressman Smith; the hospital's Liaison Officer Ruth Kennedy; and its Medical Director, Dr. Mulu Muleta.

American Human Rights Activist Visits Ethiopia . . .

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tives Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, spoke to the Washington File August 11 about his upcoming weeklong official trip to Africa.

The human-rights veteran said that, overall, he is optimistic about the political and economic future of Africa, but he counseled patience, noting that there is "no guarantee that [improvements] will come about quickly."

Smith said he plans to visit Ethiopia and Sudan August 14-20 to discuss human rights, conflict resolution and electoral issues with top government officials as well as nongovernmental organization and

religious leaders. He also visited a clinic in Ethiopia that helps repair fistulas -- childbirth injuries in women that can lead to incontinence and severe stigma, which he said "can make them modern-day lepers."

The lawmaker made a mark at the beginning of his 25-year career in Congress pushing for greater religious freedom and an end to human-rights violations in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Using his position as co-chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission), Smith became an advocate for prominent Soviet Jewish dissidents like Natan Sharansky and worked for their release.

Now, as the new head of the House Africa subcommittee, Smith said the committee's portfolio has been expanded because "concern for human rights and Africa are a natural fit. The people of Africa deserve a robust democracy. They will benefit greatly -- maybe not right away, but certainly in the long run. Adherence to democratic values will bring the prosperity shared by the rest of the world."

An important message for Africans, he said, is that "Americans care about the continent -- and our government will be there to help you deal with the political and development challenges you face."

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American Human Rights Activist Visits Ethiopia . . .

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At the same time, he said Americans "should be proud" that their country has responded quickly to emergencies like the need for food assistance in Niger, where the United States has provided the largest amount of relief aid. So far this year, U.S. food aid to Niger has totaled \$14.1 million. **(See related article on page 6)**

"We are acting aggressively to aid Africa at all levels, but in some areas, like refugee assistance, Africa is being shortchanged," he said.

Smith said he and subcommittee Africa specialist Gregg Simpkins would first stop in Ethiopia. On August 15, they met Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who retained power after elections last May, the results of which were hotly contested by the political opposition. In Addis Ababa, Smith discussed electoral issues, "particularly growing frustration from voting rights violations that have the potential to cause wider social problems beyond the protests we've seen so far."

More than 35 people were killed by Ethiopian government forces in June while protesting the delay in official election results. Smith met with electoral officials and ruling party and opposition party officials to discuss the "electoral stalemate" in Ethiopia.

The protection of women and children is a special concern of Smith's. On August 16, he visited a center in Addis Ababa that performs fistula operations. "Fistula is one of the leading killers of women in the developing world [about 8 percent of all childbirth-related deaths], and our center in Ethiopia is a model that we hope to use for other centers to help women who suffer needlessly from this terrible condition."

Smith recently inserted an amendment into the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for \$12.5 million to fund fistula operations for women in Africa.

The congressman is also proud of the law he sponsored and Congress passed in 2000 called the "Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act," aimed at child abduction and international slavery.

In Sudan, which he will be visiting for the first time, Smith said, the practice of slavery unfortunately still continues. "For some time, Sudan has been the epicenter of continued chattel slavery around the world. We need to encourage and foster ways for the Sudanese government and people to work together to finally end this ancient evil," he declared.

After the establishment of the new Government of National Unity in Sudan on July 9 and the subsequent death of Sudan People's Lib-

eration Movement leader and new First Vice President John Garang in a helicopter crash, Smith will be the first elected U.S. official to meet with President Omar Bashir when he makes his stop in Khartoum.

Despite Garang's death, "the people of Sudan must continue forward on the path toward peace and progress," Smith said. "Vice President Garang spent much of his life working to secure a better future for them, and the only way forward is to ensure that his efforts to secure peace, stability, and justice in the region are continued."

Smith said he also plans to visit refugee camps in Darfur, where Sudanese government-supported militias have waged a campaign of ethnic cleansing. "Even though the number of deaths in Darfur has fallen in recent months, the suffering of the refugees continues and effective planning must be in place to help these people recover their lives," he told the Washington File.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Child Malnutrition in Africa Could Be Halved by 2015, Report Says

By Aviva Altmann
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Though child malnutrition in Africa has increased over the past 30 years, a new report shows that with intensive policy reform and investment, malnutrition in African children could be halved by 2015.

On August 11, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) released a report titled Looking Ahead: Long-Term Prospects for Africa's Agricultural Development and Food Security to media organizations in the United States, England and Africa.



Rajul Pandya-Lorch

"This is not another doom and gloom report," said Rajul Pandya-Lorch, head of IFPRI's 2020 Vision Initiative for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment. "[It] finds that the number of malnourished in Africa, with enough investment, can drop."

The report shows that, if current trends of policy and investment continue (what IFPRI calls the "business-as-usual" model), the number of hungry children in Africa will increase by 3.3 million by 2025.

If there is a decline in domestic and international investments, IFPRI expects what they call a "pessimistic scenario," in which there would be up to 55.1 million malnourished children in sub-Saharan Africa alone in 2025, an

increase of 22.4 million since 1997.

But the report formulates what IFPRI calls the "vision scenario," which takes into account the interventions necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of cutting the number of people suffering from hunger in half by 2015. If provisions from the vision scenario are followed correctly, the report projects, the number of malnourished children would indeed be cut in half, to 15.1 million, by 2015, and cut to 9.4 million by 2025.

Mark Rosegrant, IFPRI division director of environment and production technology and the lead author of the report, explained the changes that need to be made in order to attain the vision scenario. "Our findings reveal that an additional US \$4.7 billion per year in investments above 'business-as-usual' investment levels, along with appropriate policy changes, would enable Africa to confront child malnutrition as effectively as the rest of the developing world," Rosegrant said.

The report suggests many ways to improve food security. In order to contribute to both food security and the environment, IFPRI suggests investment in irrigation -- an

increase of 141 percent over current levels to US \$48.7 billion. Investment in access to clean water would need to increase by 55 percent from current levels to US \$49.1 billion.



A starving child is carried on its mother's back at the pediatric malnutrition ward at the Lilongwe, Malawi, Central Hospital in this 2002 photo. (AP Photo/Obed Zilwa)

The demand for water in Africa is expected to increase greatly -- consumption is expected to grow by 67 percent in the next 20 years. The report shows that simply improving rain collection would diminish the economic factors that harm agriculture. "More effective rainfall

use in rain-fed areas of Africa can result in food production increases [and] price decreases, and when employed alongside irrigation practices, it can also keep food prices from escalating," according to an IFPRI summary of the report.

The report projects that in sub-Saharan countries alone, more effective rainfall use can cut Africa's cereal import burden by half, reducing imports from 17.4 million metric tons per year to 8.7 million metric tons per year in 2021-25.

Although not directly associated with agriculture, improvements in rural infrastructure and education, especially among women, are also predicted to increase food security. The report calls for a 56 percent increase in funding for infra-

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Mauritania Must Show Commitment to Constitutional Rule, U.S. Says



Adam Ereli
Deputy Spokesman

Washington -- The African Union has made clear "the necessity for a return to constitutional government" in Mauritania, the State Department's deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said during the department's regular press briefing August 10, adding, "We certainly share that view."

"Also, as we indicated yesterday, an African Union [AU] special mission is in Mauritania to endeavor to facilitate a return to constitutional government. We look forward to seeing their recommendations and findings," Ereli said.

Asked by reporters about the

"new civilian government" named August 10, Ereli said that, without details of that action, the United States will wait to see what steps are taken "that lead to and that support a return to constitutional rule."

Ereli said that transfers of power as they happened in Mauritania "aren't acceptable in the world that we live in," and "when they happen, we're all going to work together to ensure that the right thing is done. And the right thing is constitutional government reflective of and responsive to the will of the people."

The critical element in the situation, he said, is that "the authorities in Mauritania express or demonstrate in an unequivocal way their commitment to a return of constitutional rule and lay out a good program for getting there. I think that's what we all want to see. That's what the AU is going to try to facilitate. And those are, frankly, the expectations of the international community."

Ereli said that U.S. Ambassador Joseph LeBaron has met with the authorities in Mauritania and stated "very clearly our views of the events that brought them to power and what we want to see as a future course of action."

He also expressed confidence in the African Union mission that is on-site.

"We are supportive of that. They [the African Union] are, I think, in a unique position to move this process forward, to help Mauritania and help the Mauritians have a government that is truly representative of them and follows internationally accepted norms. And that's, frankly, right now where the focus of diplomacy is," Ereli said.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Niger, Sahel Region of Africa Benefit from Generous American Aid

The 206 metric tons of special food supplements airlifted to Niger by the United States on August 5 to help feed more than 34,000 at-risk children were just the latest in a series of steps taken by the U.S. government to save lives and improve living conditions for the people of Africa's Sahel region.

U.S. assistance to the region, outlined in an August 10 fact sheet from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provides support to the more than 65

million people in the nine Sahelian countries. These countries -- Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal -- are among the poorest and least food-secure nations in the world.

Americans have provided more than \$122 million in fiscal year 2005, in both bilateral and regional assistance, for programs to address food insecurity and development in the Sahel. USAID works closely with the United Nations,

the governments of the Sahel, and other donor governments, coordinating assistance efforts.

For additional information, see U. S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa.html).

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

U.S. Publication Welcomes New Immigrants

Washington – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has released a guide designed to help new immigrants to the United States settle into their new lives.

Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants (http://uscis.gov/graphics/citizenship/imm_guide.htm) is designed for permanent residents and the organizations that serve them in resettlement. It provides an array of information on meeting the ordinary needs of life, such as finding a job, paying taxes, minding money and getting health care.

The guide also offers information about the responsibilities of being a permanent resident. These include carrying proof of status (known as the “green card”) at all times, informing the Department of

Homeland Security of changes of address, paying taxes and, for young men, registering with the selective service.

This document is welcoming to newcomers but also candid in informing non-native residents of the consequence of misdeeds.



“Being a permanent resident is a ‘privilege’ and not a ‘right.’ The U.S. government can take away your permanent resident status under certain conditions,” the guide says.

Those conditions include committing serious crimes – such as murder, rape, terrorism and drug trafficking. The guide also notes consequences for lesser offenses like lying, drunkenness and failure to pay taxes or support a family.

With all those warnings made clear, the guide also encourages engagement in civic activity, and provides educational material about U.S. history and government and some instruction on how an individual can become a U.S. citizen with full rights to vote, serve in public office and carry a U.S. passport.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Child Malnutrition in Africa Could Be Halved by 2015 . . .

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structure, to US \$95.4 billion total, and a 117 percent increase in funding for education, to a total of US \$82.3 billion.

Additional improvements to policy, marketing and communications are also seen as factors that could decrease malnutrition in Africa – they would reduce obstacles to agricultural productivity.

The report provides guidance for African policy-makers and the international donor community, as it is designed to help shape the decisions at the Millennium + 5 Summit

in New York City. The summit, scheduled for September, will assess progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

“When the United Nations’ member countries meet on September 14, they have the opportunity to make good on the promises made five years ago. If they are serious [about fulfilling these promises], they need to accelerate the pace of change in Africa,” Rosegrant said.

For additional information, see U.S. Aid to Africa (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/aid_to_africa

http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html) and Global Development and Foreign Aid (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/global_development.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Muslim-American Women Find a Voice in American Society



Precious Rasheeda Muhammad

By Afzal Khan
Washington File Special Correspondent

Washington -- Islam is a religion that empowers women, according to a group of Muslim-American women speaking at a panel discussion, and contrary to popular media perceptions, Muslim women do not feel discriminated against or dispossessed within the traditions of their faith.

Precious Rasheeda Muhammad, a third-generation African-American Muslim and founder-editor of the Journal of Islam in America, introduced the August 11 panel, which was held in Washington. She said the convening of such a panel itself speaks of the freedom of Muslim-American women in the United States.

Muhammad outlined the history of prominent women in Islam since the revelation of the Quran 1,400 years ago. Some of them were political leaders and others fought as soldiers alongside men, she said.

Muhammad said that in the United States a movement to educate Muslims about their own heri-

tage and culture began with Sister Clara Muhammad, the wife of the Nation of Islam's founder, Elijah Muhammad. Sister Clara founded a network of schools to educate African-American Muslims beginning in the 1930s.

Gihan El-Gindy, an Egyptian-born Muslim-American and director of the Transcultural Educational Center (TEC) in McLean, Virginia, said there is a disconnect between Islam as practiced 1,400 years ago by the Prophet Mohammad and what is being practiced and interpreted by different Muslim countries.

"Islam as a religion and as a culture in a specific country may be very different because of local customs and man-made laws," El-Gindy said. She said media reports of oppression against women in Muslim countries had more to do with the cultural traditions indigenous to the country.

"The idea, that as a Muslim-American woman I must be oppressed, is ridiculous. I am free to do what I want. I have a separate career from that of my husband, and we both are happy," El-Gindy said. She emphasized that it is important for Muslim-Americans to have the "freedom to choose" their own "set of values" to live by, and yet be equal participants in American society.

Ayesha Mustafaa, an African-American Muslim convert and editor of the Chicago-based national weekly newspaper Muslim Journal, said Islam-oriented publications have done a lot to help Muslim-Americans find "a separate but equal voice" in mainstream American society.

"Azizah magazine did for me what Ebony did for African-American women. It gave me a voice," Mustafaa said. Azizah, a glossy quarterly magazine written for and by Muslim women, was founded in 2000 and is based in Atlanta.



Muslim-American women praying. These Muslim-American women are praying before the start of the Muslim Day Parade in New York City.

Mustafaa, an activist in the African-Muslim community, reminded the audience that Hagar, the Prophet Abraham's second wife and the mother of Ishmael, from whom Arabs are said to be descended, was a black woman.

Mustafaa said contrary to the widespread belief that women occupy a secondary position to that

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Americans with Disabilities Are Achieving Real Progress

On July 26, President Bush commemorated the 15th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which guarantees equal opportunity for people with disabilities in public accommodations, commercial facilities, employment, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications.

The effects of the ADA are evident everywhere in the United States. For example, eight out of 10 people with disabilities graduate from high school, compared with six out of 10 in 1990. More than half of Americans with disabilities who say they are able to work now have jobs.

"On the 15th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we celebrate the progress that has been made and reaffirm

our commitment to fulfilling the ADA's mission of bringing greater hope and opportunity to our Nation's disabled Americans."

-- President George W. Bush
July 26, 2005

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which President George H.W. Bush signed on July 26, 1990 guarantees equal opportunity for people with disabilities in public accommodations, commercial facilities, employment, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications.

Currently in the United States, eight out of 10 people with disabilities graduate from high school, compared with six out of 10 in 1990. More than half of Americans with disabilities who say they are able to work now have jobs.

Progress under the ADA is evident all around the United States, where it no longer is unusual to



President Bush (L) gives a tour of the Oval Office after the signing of the Presidential Proclamation to Commemorate the 15th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act in the Oval Office in Washington, July 26, 2005

see people with disabilities enjoying themselves in parks, dining out at restaurants, working in the office, participating in town meetings, shopping at the malls or riding public transportation.

The effects of the ADA continue to grow with the years. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 6, 2005 in *Spector vs. Norwegian Cruise Line* that the ADA applies to cruise ships in U.S. waters.

WHAT THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS DOING

The Bush administration has begun or continued a number of programs specifically designed to enhance the quality of life and protect the rights of individuals with disabilities:

-- The New Freedom Initiative (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/freedominitiative/freedominitiative.html>), announced by President Bush in February

2001, sets out a comprehensive strategy for the full integration of people with disabilities into all aspects of American life.

-- The U.S. Department of Justice has established the ADA Business Connection (<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/business.htm>) to build partnerships between the business community and people with disabilities. This program

helps increase voluntary compliance with the ADA and brings individuals with disabilities into the economic mainstream.

-- Through Project Civic Access (<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/civacac.htm>), the federal government has reached agreements with cities and towns across the United States to ensure that people with disabilities are integrated into community life.

-- DisabilityInfo.gov (<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/>) is an inter-agency Web site established in Au-

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Americans with Disabilities Are Achieving . . .

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gust 2002 that connects people with disabilities to the information and resources they need to pursue their personal and professional ambitions.

This site includes specific pages aimed at international audiences, such as:

International Resources and Information (<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/digov-public/public/DisplayPage.do?parentFolderId=5046>), which offers technical solutions to removing barriers, and

The Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange (CIRRIE) (<http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/intinfo.html>), which facilitates the sharing of information and expertise in rehabilitation research between the United States and other countries and maintains an international rehabilitation research database to enable users to locate research in their field by country. CIRRIE also provides information for organizations located outside the United States that wish to bring U.S. rehabilitation experts to their countries for conference or exchange activities.

-- To ensure that no child with a disability is left behind, President Bush has requested \$11.1 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act in his FY 2006 budget -- \$4.7 billion above the FY 2001 level.

-- In addition, President Bush has signed executive orders that remove barriers to equal opportunities faced by people with disabilities.

disadvantaged, including people with disabilities. This order helps federally assisted community transportation services provide seamless, comprehensive and accessible transportation services to people who rely on transportation services for their lives and livelihood.



President George W. Bush signs an executive order for individuals with disabilities in emergency preparedness Thursday, July 22, 2004 in the Oval Office.

A July 22, 2004 executive order makes government agencies responsible for properly taking into account agency employees and customers with disabilities in emergency preparedness planning and coordination with other government entities.

President Bush also signed an executive order on February 24, 2004 to improve transportation for people who are transportation-

-- The Bush administration has also begun implementing the recommendations of the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. The commission, established by executive order, submitted a report to the president that lays out steps for improving mental health services and support for people of all ages with mental illness. The text (<http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov/reports/reports.htm>) of the report is available on the commission's Web site.

(end fact sheet)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U. S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

U.S. Academic Experts Advise Against Security Council Expansion

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

United Nations -- Questioning current efforts to enlarge the U.N. Security Council, two foreign affairs experts say that nations must decide what is wrong with the current system before undertaking any changes.

Even though groups have been working on this issue for about 12 years, "they have yet really to define what the problem is," said Edward Luck, director of the Center on International Organizations of the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. "If we don't have a common understanding of what ails the Security Council, we will not be able to have any common understanding on where to go from here."

"Yes, the Security Council needs reform; everything needs reform; everybody needs reform. There is no doubt about it, but the problem is getting it right," Luck said August 9 during a panel discussion on reform at U.N. headquarters.

"Frankly, if we harm the Security Council, we are doing harm to the core of this organization. We have to be very, very careful how we go about this."

Ruth Wedgwood, director of the international law and organization program at Johns Hopkins University, said that the real challenge in Security Council reform is not the number of members but "insightful management proposals on how to make the council better in its own administration."

With its sanctions committees, counterterrorism committee, and other programs such as the defunct Iraq Oil-for-Food Program, the Security Council has become "a hugely intricate administrative body ... with no real institutional additions to give force to these ad hoc tasks the council has taken upon itself," Wedgwood said.

The current effort to enlarge the Security Council was prompted by urgings from Secretary-General Kofi Annan and a high-level panel of experts, both of whom released reports in the past year in anticipation of the United Nations 60th Anniversary and September summit. Many nations see the summit, which is expected to draw over 150 heads of state and government, as the venue to approve changes in the organization.

But the effort has stalled as three different groups have sponsored resolutions in the U.N. General Assembly. One has been proposed by four countries seeking permanent membership -- Brazil, India, Japan and Germany. A second draft resolution has been tabled by the African Union, and another by a group calling itself "uniting for consensus." All would expand the council to 25 or 26 members. The United States does not believe that any proposal, including a different one based on U.S. ideas, should be voted upon at this stage.

Both scholars said that they wished the Security Council expansion issue had been left out of the reform process, which has other important components.

Luck said that "this is just not a promising time" to undertake

changes in the 15-nation Security Council. "There simply is not a convergence of views."

An anniversary year should not be looked on as "some golden opportunity. Reform is a process, not an event," Luck added. "This year, somehow it is an event ... and we have to achieve everything in September. It's not going to happen."

Luck sees the discussion as "immature and unripe after all these years."

"Ninety-nine percent of the discussion has been why this country or that country deserves to be on the council. That is putting the cart before the horse. The question is: What kind of a council do we really need?" he said.

Luck posed a series of questions that he said need to be reflected upon and answered before crafting changes in the Security Council:

"Has the council been too active or too passive?" "Is the problem one of substance, the working methods and how it goes about its work, or is the problem composition?" Does the council's authority derive from who decides, from what is decided, or from what is implemented? What would make the council more representative: adding more members, the relationship between council members and the larger U.N. members; or transparency? "We hear a great deal about the geopolitical realities of the 21st century," Luck said, introducing his next question for reflection. "No one has

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U.S.-Backed Research Offers New Path to Finding AIDS Cure

U.S. government-funded research has opened a door on a new strategy for research that could lead to a cure for AIDS by eradicating HIV viruses in the body, according to findings reported from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC).

Researchers administered a drug used as an anti-seizure and antidepressant medication to test subjects to attack dormant HIV viruses that can hide in resting immune system cells from drugs now used in highly active anti-retroviral therapy (HAART). This treatment regimen has been effective in controlling AIDS symptoms, allowing ongoing management of the disease, but not a cure.

The research, published in *The Lancet* August 13, found that adding the drug valproate to patients' drug cocktail attacked reservoirs of hidden HIV viruses by targeting an enzyme that allows the virus to become latent.

The study found a 75 percent average decline in latent infection among four test subjects.

"Our findings suggest a new and practical approach to eliminate HIV infection in this persistent reservoir," said Dr. David M. Margolis, the study's senior author and professor of medicine, microbiology and immunology in the School of Medicine at UNC.

Margolis was part of a team from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas when the research was conducted.

The National Institutes of Health and the Veterans Affairs Research Service supported the research.

The text of a UNC news release on the work follows:

(begin text)

The University of North Carolina of Chapel Hill
www.unc.edu/news (<http://www.unc.edu/news/>)
News Release

Aug. 11, 2005 -- No. 353

Study may point way to AIDS cure; new combined therapy helps remove dormant HIV in immune system cells



Dr. David M. Margolis

By LESLIE H. LANG

UNC School of Medicine

CHAPEL HILL -- A drug known for its anti-seizure and antidepressant activity appears to be the key ingredient in a new combination therapy that may direct scientists to an AIDS cure.

The new research is reported in the Saturday (Aug. 13) issue of *The Lancet*, the international medical journal based in England. The study shows for the first time that the drug valproate (valproic acid), in combination with an intensified version of the standard AIDS drug cocktail known as

HAART, or highly active anti-retroviral therapy, might eradicate dormant HIV viruses from their hiding place in resting immune system cells.

"Studies have shown that persistent infection in a reservoir of resting, or quiescent, CD4+ T cells prevents viral eradication by HAART," said Dr. David M. Margolis, the study's senior author and professor of medicine, microbiology and immunology in the School of Medicine and professor of epidemiology in the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"Our findings suggest a new and practical approach to eliminate HIV infection in this persistent reservoir."

CD4+ T cells are white blood cells that orchestrate the immune response, signaling other cells in the immune system to perform their special functions. Also known as helper T cells, these cells are killed or disabled during HIV infection.

Prior to joining the UNC faculty this month, Margolis and his laboratory at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas for several years explored how HIV can lay silent or dormant in resting T cells, an issue Margolis called a major conceptual barrier to the eradication of HIV infection.

Added Margolis, "There are shortcomings to current anti-retroviral therapy; currently it works 99.99 percent but that last .01 percent is still a problem. There remains low-level viral repli-

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U.S.-Backed Research Offers New Path to Finding . . .

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cation that goes on despite current therapy.

"But even if we could overcome that last one-hundredth of a percent of replication, there is no way that the dormant latent virus can be cleared by the immune system or by current anti-viral therapy. There has been no approach that specifically attacks this reservoir of infection."

Among the key host enzymes that help maintain HIV's latency is histone deacetylase 1 (HDAC1), part of the "off" switch in gene expression, Margolis said. Several years of research in his laboratory led to the finding that a class of drugs developed for other medical reasons is targeting the enzyme. Valproate, or valproic acid, is one of these drugs.

The next step was to conduct a clinical study involving HIV-infected individuals, one that might offer "proof of concept" that tested the ability of valproate to deplete persistent, latent infection in resting CD4+ T cells.

"We were attempting to prove that the biochemical mechanism of action that we had already shown in various human cell culture systems in the lab could also work in humans given a clinically safe dose of valproate," Margolis said.

In the study, four adult volunteers infected with HIV and on treatment with HAART also received injections of the drug enfuvirtide twice daily for six weeks.

Oral doses of valproate twice daily were then added to the treatment regimen for three months. Laboratory assays measured latent infection of CD4+ T cells before and after intensified treatment with valproate.

"Instead of having to develop a drug from scratch, we were able to go to the hospital pharmacy and write prescriptions for valproate, which is a drug that's used to prevent seizures and now to treat depression. And it's a drug that inhibits the very same enzyme that's key for the viral latency," Margolis said.

During the study, the Dallas team collected billions of CD4+ cells from the volunteers' blood samples and isolated hundreds of millions of resting CD4+ T cells.

The study showed a 75 percent average decline in latent infection, with a range between 68 percent and more than 84 percent.

"Further studies are needed to confirm, expand and deepen our observations," the study said. Additionally, the findings, though not definitive, suggest that new approaches will allow the cure of HIV in the future.

Dr. Myron S. Cohen, J. Herbert Bate distinguished professor in medicine, microbiology and immunology and public health and chief of UNC's Division of Infectious Diseases, agreed.

"For the last few years investigators have been meeting quietly to

discuss the challenge of 'the latent pool.' Indeed, it is this 'special HIV compartment' that has blocked investigators even from so much as openly talking about a cure for HIV and AIDS," he said.

"Dr. David Margolis' work is the first bright light at the end of a very long tunnel. He has shown, at least preliminarily, that it is feasible to attack the latent pool. I would hope that this report would galvanize research teams to pursue this critical goal."

Along with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas team were co-authors from the National Cancer Institute; Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center; the University of California at San Diego and Veterans Affairs Medical Center, San Diego; the University of Washington; the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine; the Harvard School of Public Health; and North Texas Veterans Health Care Systems in Dallas.

The National Institutes of Health and the Veterans Affairs Research Service supported the research.

Further information about the UNC Center for Infectious Diseases and its various programs can be found at: <http://www.id.unc.edu/moreID.htm>.

(end text)

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Volcanic Blast Location Influences Climate Reaction, Study Finds



Luke Oman

New research funded by NASA and the U.S. National Science Foundation on tiny particles called "aerosols" shows that major volcanic eruptions far north of the equator affect global climate much differently than do eruptions in the tropics.

"Studying such events will help us be better prepared for the next major eruption, while giving scientists clues on the type of climate shifts and changes to expect," said lead study author Luke Oman at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

When a volcano erupts, it does more than create an ash cloud that darkens and cools a region for a few days. A strong eruption injects material into the stratosphere, more than 16 kilometers above the Earth's surface, where aerosols form when sulfur dioxide from the volcano combines with water vapor.

Sulfur dioxide is a gas produced by volcanoes and some industrial processes that is irritating to the lungs and smells like burning sulfur, also called brimstone.

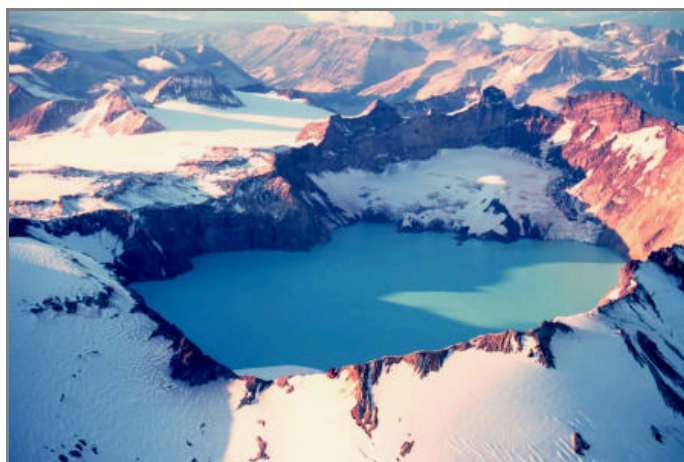
The scientists examined the 1912 eruption of Mount Katmai in Alaska -- one of the largest in the world during the 20th century. Ash fall from the eruption covered

more than 7,700 square kilometers to a depth of 30 centimeters or more. Its ash cloud spread a haze as far away as Africa.

To study the eruption, the researchers used a modern general circulation computer climate model at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) in New York. Unlike studies of volcanic eruptions in the tropics, the Mount Katmai research did not show a change in an important climate pattern called the Arctic oscillation after the eruption.

As a result, he added, the lower stratosphere does not warm enough to influence the Arctic oscillation.

Eruptions in the tropics, like the 1991 Mount Pinatubo eruption in the Philippines, create aerosols that block heat from the sun in the lower atmosphere and cool temperatures in the subtropics. These lower subtropical temperatures interact with the Arctic oscillation to produce generally warmer winters over the Northern Hemisphere.



Mount Katmai

But the Mount Katmai eruption produced strong summer cooling over the Northern Hemisphere and weakened the Asian monsoon, Oman said.

"This study not only offers further evidence that the location and intensity of an eruption largely determine the Earth's overall climatic response, it also helps us see how well our computer models per-

form," said co-author Gavin Schmidt of NASA.

The full press release (http://www.nasa.gov/centers/goddard/news/topstory/2005/volcano_climate.html) with graphics is available on NASA's Web site.

The Arctic oscillation is a climate pattern whose winds circulate counterclockwise around the Arctic. The air can spin more slowly and spill cold air down toward the equator into the mid-latitudes, or it can spin faster and keep the cold up north.

"Large tropical volcanic eruptions tend to spread aerosols around the globe," Oman said, "but with high-latitude eruptions like Katmai, [aerosols] remain north of 30 degrees north latitude, where they are heated less efficiently by outgoing ... radiation."

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U.S., French Astronomers Find First Triple Asteroid System

U.S. and French astronomers have found that one of the thousands of asteroids orbiting the Sun has a mini planetary system of its own, according to an August 10 press release from the University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley).

The work was partially supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation and the American Astronomical Society.

Astronomer Franck Marchis at UC Berkeley and colleagues at the Observatoire de Paris discovered the first triple asteroid system -- two small asteroids orbiting a larger asteroid that has been known since 1866 as 87 Sylvia.

Because 87 Sylvia was named after Rhea Sylvia, the mythical mother of the founders of Rome, Marchis proposed naming the twin moons after the founders, Romulus and Remus. The International Astronomical Union approved the names.

Asteroid 87 Sylvia is one of the largest known from the asteroid main belt, which is located between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. Sylvia, shaped like a lumpy potato, is 280 kilometers in diameter and located 3.5 astronomical units

from the Sun.

An astronomical unit is 150 million kilometers, the average distance between the Sun and Earth.



Astronomer Franck Marchis

utes.

"People have been looking for multiple asteroid systems for a long time," Marchis said, "because binary asteroid systems in the main belt seem to be common.

"I couldn't believe we found one," he added.

From two months' of observations of the moonlets' orbits, Marchis and colleagues in Paris calculated Sylvia's mass and density.

Sylvia is called a "rubble-pile" asteroid, Marchis said. Such asteroids are loose aggregations of rock presumably created when one as-

teroid smacked into another, disrupting one or both of them. A new asteroid was probably formed later by accretion of large fragments from the disruption.

Accretion is an increase in the mass of an asteroid or other body when its gravity pulls in interstellar gases and nearby objects.

87 Sylvia may be composed of water, ice and rubble from an asteroid formed when the universe began.

"It could be up to 60 percent empty space," said astronomer Daniel Hestroffer, one of three co-authors from the Institut de Mécanique Céleste et Calculs d'Éphémérides at the Observatoire de Paris.

The moonlets are probably debris left over from the collision that were gravitationally captured by the newly formed asteroid and eventually settled into orbits around it.

The discovery was made with one of the European Southern Observatory's 8-meter telescopes of the Very Large Telescope at Cerro Paranal in Chile. Marchis and colleagues obtained sky images of many asteroids over six months.

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PUBLIC AFFAIRS
SECTION
AMERICAN EMBASSY

P.O.Box 1014
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Phone: 251-1-174007
251-1-174000
Fax: 251-1-242454
Email: pasaddis@state.gov



U.S. Academic Experts Advise Against . . .

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told us what those geopolitical realities are, and why those realities suggest we ought to have a council of 25 or 26 members with 11 permanent members." The question: "which U.N. intergovernmental body has become stronger and more effective after it was enlarged?" Luck said that he does not favor any of the proposals for the Security Council put forward to date, and "has qualms about adding any permanent members at this point."

"An effective council is one that can respond to a crisis or emergency quickly, has a decent chance of getting consensus, one that does reflect real power realities in the world ... and yet has plenty of space for the different interests and the different kinds of countries in this organization," he said.

Wedgwood added that one of the most important proposals for reform is not changing the Security Council but eliminating the unwieldy and very political Human Rights Commission and replacing it with a smaller, so-called Human Rights Council.

The human rights functions "in many ways has been the (United Nations') most successful project in terms of setting norms for countries that are coming out of difficult transitional periods, that don't have the traditional democratic legacy," she said. "It has given a benchmark against which countries can measure themselves."

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Muslim-American Women Find a Voice in American . . .

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of men in Muslim society, the Prophet Mohammad deemed it otherwise. She said that this is evident in two of his popular sayings: "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother," and "If you educate just two of your daughters, you will go straight to Paradise."

Zakia Mahasa, an African-American Muslim convert and a judge in a juvenile court in Baltimore, said her conversion to Islam was actually "a rebirth" because all human beings are supposed to submit to the will of God.

Mahasa said that when she first converted and began to wear the distinctive attire of a Muslim woman, her father feared it would hurt her career. But she says that has not been the case. On the contrary, she says, people began to respect her for her individuality and firm rooting in her faith.

"The law of the land has the same qualities extolled in Islam such as being just and being compassionate. My professional choice is in concert with Islam," Mahasa said.

Mahasa said that after the September 11 terrorist attacks, it is important for every Muslim to become "an ambassador of Islam." "It is the worst time to fade into the background," she said.

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